United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General, in televised message to people of Somalia, says "vast undertaking", including unified military command, is intended to restore hope; asks for their cooperation.

+ Three days of meetings, involving all three parties to conflict in former Yugoslavia, to have begun in Geneva today; UNHCR starts shipment of humanitarian supplies by train to Mostar; Sarajevo airport still closed.

+ About 5,000 refugees, fleeing civil war in Tajikistan, swim across icy Amudar'ya River into Afghanistan in search of food, shelter and safety; another 140,000 displaced are stranded along border with Afghanistan, according to UNHCR.

+ General Assembly calls for continued preparations for 1995 observance of Fiftieth Anniversary of United Nations; elects Elizabeth Dowdeswell of Canada Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme.

+ Inventory of weapons, submitted by Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberacion Nacional to United Nations, is found "satisfactory"; action called by Secretary-General an important step towards 15 December deadline for cessation of armed conflict in El Salvador.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in a televised message this afternoon to the people of Somalia, said the United Nations, together with unified military command, intended to restore their hope, and he asked for their cooperation in "this vast undertaking".

The people of the world, he said, had been deeply moved by the unique and desperate situation in Somalia and had refused to accept the suffering and death there. "The United Nations is taking action in Somalia in the cause of security, humanitarian relief and political reconciliation", indicated the Secretary-General.

(more)

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The unified military command arriving in Somalia under the United Nations mandate, he said, was coming "to feed the starving, protect the defenseless and prepare the way for political, economic and social reconstruction". As the effort continued, the United Nations would be working towards long-term solutions for the problems of the country, assured Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

In a related development, a United Nations spokesman said today that even though the military operation going into Somalia was authorized by the Security Council, the force was not under United Nations command and, therefore, would not be flying the United Nations flag.

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Three days of meetings involving all three parties to the conflict in former Yugoslavia were to begin in Geneva today, according to a statement issued by the spokesman for the two Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference, Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen. Participating in today's meetings are the Government delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, headed by Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic; the Bosnian Croat delegation, headed by Mate Boban; and the Bosnian Serb delegation, headed by Radovan Karadzic. Similar meetings are scheduled for tomorrow and Thursday.

The spokesman said the meeting of the Geneva Conference's Steering Committee on 16 December, which has been expanded to include ministerial-level participation, was to be held under the same "basic formula" that was used in London in late August, minus the representatives of former Yugoslavia. About 32 delegations or individuals would be attending, he said, including members of the European Community; the five Permanent Members of the Security Council; three representatives of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE); the "Group of Seven" major economic powers; States neighbouring the former Yugoslavia; representatives of the Organization of the Islamic Conference; Switzerland; the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); and as an observer, Lord Carrington.

The spokesman further reported that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) yesterday had sent the first shipment of humanitarian supplies by train from the port of Ploce to Mostar. This rail line could be used all the way to Sarajevo if two bridges could be repaired, and would be more efficient than either the airlift or road convoys, he added.

In a related development, a United Nations official said today that the situation in Sarajevo was "extremely volatile". It was hoped that the airlift to the city could be resumed, but with the increased level of hostilities, that possibility seemed unlikely.

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About 5,000 Tajik refugees, fleeing an escalating civil war in their homeland, have swum across the icy Amudar'ya River into Afghanistan in search of food, shelter and safety, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported today.

(more)

The refugees began arriving in the northern Afghan provinces of Kunduz and Samangan over the weekend. Officials of the UNHCR in Afghanistan who interviewed the new arrivals described them as being very hungry, cold and in miserable condition. They told the UNHCR and local Afghan authorities that about 200 fellow Tajiks had died while crossing the river.

According to the UNHCR, the new arrivals were part of some 140,000 internally displaced Tajiks, some of whom having been stranded shelterless for about two weeks in Koshma, along the Central Asian Republic's southern border with Afghanistan. The Agency said hundreds of thousands of Tajiks had fled their villages and towns because of the civil war pitting rival clans and ethnic factions in Tajikistan, the poorest of the former Soviet Republics suffering from acute shortages of food, medicine and fuel.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali recently dispatched a mission to support regional efforts at peace-making and peace-keeping, and to evaluate the humanitarian assistance needs in Tajikistan.

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The General Assembly this morning authorized the Preparatory Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations to continue considering proposals for suitable activities in connection with that observance in 1995. It noted the Committee's work during the past year and called upon it to report to the Assembly again next year.

Also this morning, the Assembly elected Elizabeth Dowdeswell of Canada as Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for a four-year term beginning on 1 January 1993.

The Assembly concluded its discussion on the situation in Central America and the Secretary-General's report on efforts to promote peace, freedom, democracy and development in the region. Introducing a draft resolution on the situation in Central America on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, the representative of Nicaragua expressed regret that the Secretary-General's report had been so limited in scope and called for a revised text.

The representative of the United States said that, with Central America so close to ending all its internal conflicts, the stage was set for rapid progress in reducing the size of military budgets, regional integration on the basis of free and open trading regimes, and structural reforms that would allow for the redistribution of national resources to productive investment.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali informed yesterday the Government of El Salvador that the detailed inventory of weapons, presented last week by the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) to the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), had been analyzed and "found satisfactory". According to his Spokesman today, the Secretary-General said

the inventory, together with the fact that the destruction of the weapons it listed had already begun, were "important steps towards the completion of the process of the cessation of the armed conflict in El Salvador on 15 December 1992".

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